


# Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and Beyond

*By Simon Ross Valentine*

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**Force and Fanaticism: Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and Beyond** By Simon Ross Valentine

Wahhabism is an Islamic reform movement found mainly in Saudi Arabia. Closely linked to the Saudi monarchy, it enforces a strict code of morality and conduct monitored by mutawa (religious police), and governs every facet of Saudi life according to its own strict interpretation of Shariah, including gender segregation. Wahhabism also prohibits the practice of any other faith (even other forms of Islam) in Saudi Arabia, which is also the only country that forbids women from driving.

But what exactly is Wahhabism? This question had long occupied Valentine, so he lived in the Kingdom for three years, familiarizing himself with its distinct interpretation of Islam. His book defines Wahhabism and Wahhabi beliefs and considers the life and teaching of Muham-mad ibn Abd'al Wahhab and the later expansion of his sect. Also discussed are the rejection of later developments in Islam such as bid'ah; harmful innovations, among them celebrating the prophet's birthday and visiting the tombs of saints; the destruction of holy sites due to the fear of idolatry; Wahhabi law, which imposes the death sentence for crimes as archaic as witch- craft and sorcery, and the connection of Wahhabism with militant Islam globally.

Drawing on interviews with Saudis from all walks of life, including members of the feared mutawa, this book appraises of one of the most significant movements in contemporary Islam.

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## Editorial Review

Review
'Dr Valentine has written an arresting study that combines the curiosity of the travel writer, the tenacity of a good journalist, and the rigour of the academic ... provides not only an exhaustive account of Wahhabism's founder, history and spread, doctrines, and practices, but also communicates something of the texture of its lived reality' --Church Times; 'Valentine, a British Methodist pastor and teacher who taught in Saudi Arabia, has written a useful book about the desert kingdom ... The author explores important topics, including the mutawwa, or religious police, and provides useful historical context, discussing the origins of "Wahhabism," its alliance with the House of Saud, and the oil discoveries that changed everything.' --The Jewish Voice; 'A thoughtful and comprehensive overview of Wahhabi Islam and its influence on public life in Saudi Arabia. The author's mix of analyses and anecdotes makes for an interesting and easy read ... Partly a travelogue, Force and Fanaticism also gives powerful impressions of life in the Kingdom, especially among ordinary people.' --Middle East Journal

About the Author

Simon Ross Valentine is a freelance British lecturer and researcher into Islam and comparative religions who has taught part-time at Leeds University and Bradford University. His first book was*Islam and the Ahmadiyya Jama'at: History, Belief, Practice* .

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